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ABSTRACT

This fastback offers a plan for a disciplined writing program both for those who have never written for professional journals and for those who have had some initial success in getting published. In addition to providing information needed for preparing manuscripts and suggestions for getting them accepted in journals, the booklet also includes information to help writers structure a writing program that will achieve their professional goals and accelerate the rate of publishing success, emphasizing the positive attitudes of confidence and determination. The first two sections of the fastback address the question of "why write" and discuss the best time to write. The third section provides a guide on how to begin writing, including choosing a topic, the right tools, opening sentence and paragraph, and manuscript length. The fourth section on matters of style focuses on the elements of clarity and conciseness. The fifth part supplies information concerning the placement of a manuscript with the right journal, and discusses query letters, refereed and nonrefereed journals, writing for a research journal, and the author-editor relationship. The final section deals with collaborating with a co-author. (A list of resources for the prospective writer is appended.) (MM)

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Writing for Professional Publication

Kenneth T. Henson

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EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

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Writing for Professional Publication

by
Kenneth T. Henson

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The chapter sponsors this fastback to honor the memory of Richard P. Dunn, who held all the major offices and was a past president of the chapter. His many contributions are part of the fabric of this chapter and of the fraternity.

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Introduction

This fastback is written both for those who have never written for professional journals and for those who have had some initial success in getting published. For the unpublished, it will provide information needed for preparing manuscripts and suggestions for getting them accepted in journals. For those who have published, it will provide information to help them structure their writing program in ways that will achieve their professional goals and accelerate their rate of publishing success.

What distinguishes successful writers from would-be writers is mostly a matter of attitude – an attitude that says, "I can succeed as a writer and I will succeed." By contrast, the would-be writer often fails because of negative attitudes, such as the fear of receiving an editor's rejection letter. This fear of failure deters them from trying to place the manuscript with another journal. Or the would-be writer succumbs to such rationalizations as, "I don't write because the journals already are full of mediocre articles, and I refuse to contribute to inferior journals." They neglect to explain why they don't contribute their first-rate manuscript, which would improve the quality of the "inferior" journal.

The positive attitudes of confidence and determination, when combined with a disciplined program for writing, help to produce successful writers. This fastback offers a plan for a disciplined program for writing.

Why Write?

Successful authors have specific reasons for writing, reasons that they clearly understand. They know what writing can do to achieve their professional goals. This clarity of purpose for writing provides authors with energy, drive, and persistence – qualities that lead to success.

Some educators say they write because it helps them to clarify their own thinking. Writing forces them to organize their ideas in a logical and convincing way that communicates to others. Others write because they see publication as a way to share information and ideas with a wider audience. A teacher or professor's direct audience seldom exceeds a few hundred students at most. By publishing in education journals they can reach an audience of thousands. For example, the circulation of the *Phi Delta Kappan* is approximately 145,000.

As educators grow professionally, many feel a responsibility to contribute to the advancement of their profession. Having benefited from the knowledge of others, they say it is now time that they contribute back to this body of knowledge. They write to share the knowledge they have generated through research or the insights they have gained through years of experience in the profession.

A less altruistic reason for writing is the "publish or perish" pressure that pervades most university campuses, where a successful record of publication is a key factor in determining promotion, tenure, and merit pay. For the junior professor, publications often are essen-

tial for receiving tenure and promotion; and they can be the key to landing a choice position at a desired institution. For the senior, tenured professor, publications are necessary to maintain one's reputation in a field as well as for future salary increases. Clearly then, the pressure to publish is a compelling motivation for those in higher education.

In the final analysis, each person's reasons for writing are highly personal. What is important is that you clarify your own reasons for writing and then design your writing program accordingly.

Finding Time to Write

A question frequently asked at writing workshops and in courses on writing for publication is, "How do you find time to write?" The response of successful writers is, "I don't find time for it. I just do it." Despite the demands on their time, they realize that publishing is important for their careers and conclude that they can ill afford not to write. Finding time to write means making some sacrifices, such as not lingering over that second cup of coffee with colleagues in the lounge or not watching a mediocre TV program. Productive people are good organizers of their time. If their current schedule intrudes on their writing time, they change their schedule.

To make time for writing, first set some immediate goals, which when accomplished contribute to long-range goals. For example, the immediate goal of completing a journal manuscript by Friday is more likely to be accomplished than the long-range goal of getting two articles accepted this year. When setting immediate goals, state each one precisely. For example, rather than saying, "I will try to complete as much of this manuscript as possible this week," be more assertive and say, "By Friday I will complete the first draft of this manuscript." Actually writing down the goal often seems to help; in fact, some successful writers insist that they write down daily and weekly goals. Their success is clear evidence that this practice helps them find time to achieve their goals.

Having goals for writing should not preclude time for other pleasurable activities. There must be balance in one's life. Joggers should not give up jogging; family responsibilities should not be neglected. A balanced schedule includes a variety of goals and can lead to a better attitude toward writing.

The Best Time to Write

Related to the question, "How do you find time to write?" is the question, "What is the best time to write?" The answer to this question is very much an individual matter. We all operate on some kind of weekly schedule that is unique to our job and family responsibilities. Finding time to write must fit into that schedule or the schedule must be modified. Other considerations are the conditions one requires for writing. Some people require complete silence in order to concentrate on their writing. For these people 9 to 11 at night might be a better time than 9 to 11 in the morning when interruptions by the telephone, students, or colleagues would be distracting. Some people are early risers whose minds are fresh and creative at 5:00 a.m.; others claim they are no good at anything before 10:00 a.m.

Many writers maintain that they must allot at least two hours for a writing session. For them, a lesser amount of time would be wasted in making preparations to write and in getting into the desired mental frame, thus leaving no time for writing. One prolific writer equates writing with digging a well. The well-digger must make the hole deeper each time he enters the well; otherwise all allotted time is spent getting into and climbing out of the well. So, too, must the writer schedule enough time for each session in order to progress beyond just making preparations for writing.

How to Begin: Choosing a Topic

The best advice for any novice writer is to choose topics that you know and care about. In choosing a topic to write about, educators should look first at what they are doing well in their own jobs, things that they feel should be shared with others. For example, graduate students who have just completed a dissertation have identified a problem, have reviewed a large body of literature, have developed a research design, have gathered data, and have reached some conclusions. They know a lot about the problem under investigation, and they usually care about it passionately. A dissertation should provide enough substance for at least two or three good articles.

Beginning writers often make the mistake of choosing a topic because it is popular. Because they have read many articles about it in professional journals and in the mass media, they want to join the discussion and add their views. What they don't realize is that by the time their article is written, accepted, and published – a process that could take up to a year or more – the topic may be stale news. Editors are very conscious of when a topic has been saturated. They are looking for articles on emerging issues.

Of course, interest in some topics seems to have a cyclical pattern. Examples are the gifted, dropouts, teacher evaluation, merit pay, and textbook censorship, to name a few. The problem for the writer is predicting when the next cycle of interest will occur. Sometimes a specific event will generate new interest in an old topic. An example

is the current AIDS epidemic, which has resulted in renewed interest in sex education programs.

So, how does a writer identify what the emerging issues will be? First, writers must be readers. They must read widely in both professional journals and in the mass media in order to spot trends. They must follow legislation at both state and national levels that affects education. Second, writers should look to their professional associations for emerging issues in their respective fields. The announced topics for forthcoming yearbooks and theme issues of journals provide a good source for identifying issues that will be popular in the next year or two. Still another source for emerging issues are the topics being discussed at conferences sponsored by professional associations. Speakers at these conferences are leaders in their fields. What they are talking about today will likely be what they will be writing about in books, yearbook chapters, and journals in another year or two. Check them out.

As important as choosing a topic is identifying the intended audience for your writing. Are you writing for a general audience of educators? For beginning teachers? For parents? For superintendents? For high school social studies teachers? Many of the journals in education are intended for a specialized audience. The writer must speak to that audience by addressing issues and using examples that are relevant to that audience.

With a topic and an audience identified, you are now ready to begin writing. But before sitting down at the typewriter or microcomputer or curling up in your favorite armchair with legal pad and No. 2 pencil, take a moment to assemble the tools you will need. This will save time and keep you on task.

The Right Tools

An essential tool for any writer is a good comprehensive dictionary. A comprehensive dictionary is not only necessary for spelling and definitions but also for distinguishing nuances of word meaning

and for clarifying matters of usage. Many writers also like a small paperback dictionary for just checking spelling. Those who know they are poor spellers should consider using one of the new typewriters or a word processor with spelling checker programs. Other reference books that many writers like to have handy are a thesaurus and a book of quotations.

Access to a good library is another essential tool. Some writers rely heavily on their own personal libraries in their offices and do most of their writing there. However, many topics require research in references that are found only in a public or university library. When using quotes or statistical data from library references, make sure that complete bibliographic data is recorded for subsequent use in footnotes or a bibliography.

Many writers today consider a personal computer with its word-processing functions as essential for their work as they once did a typewriter. Computers offer many time-saving features for the writer. Corrections can be made easily; sentences and even entire paragraphs can be moved to other parts of the manuscript without retyping. These functions become most useful when editing and revising. Most editors now accept manuscripts produced on computer printers. Some even encourage authors to transmit their manuscripts electronically over telephone lines using a modem.

Begin to Write

Much writing begins as mental activity or mental writing. Because the writer has thought about the topic for some time, ideas begin to fall into an organization, examples and analogies to illustrate ideas come to mind. Some writers may even make a mental outline. It is this mental writing that allows some writers to start off with a series of sentences and paragraphs falling into place almost effortlessly, or so it seems. For most, however, writing is hard work with brief spurts of productivity followed by long periods of concentration. What is

important is to begin. Don't wait for creative inspiration. Get some words down on paper.

The Opening Sentence

Skillful writers are able to grab the reader's attention with the first sentence. There are many ways they do this. One way is by asking a question that states the theme of the entire manuscript and leads the reader to find out how the writer will answer it. For example, the opening sentence, "What should the principal know about student rights?" tells the reader precisely what the author will be dealing with in the rest of the article. A principal reading this sentence will likely respond, "This is a topic that affects me personally in my job. What should I know about it?"

Another effective opening sentence is a bold and blunt statement. For example, "Teachers do not use research to improve their instruction" or "Teachers overestimate the value of their personal experience." Each of these sentences is likely to get the attention of readers. And if they are teachers, they might become angry or at least defensive. They will want to read on to see how the author supports these bold statements.

The Opening Paragraph

The opening paragraph should serve as an advance organizer, telling the readers what they can expect from reading the rest of the article. Educators are busy people with limited time for reading. If the opening paragraph tells them clearly and concisely what the article covers, they can then decide whether it is worth their time to read it. The opening paragraph should have only one focus, with each sentence advancing the thought expressed in the lead sentence. Consider the two drafts of an opening paragraph below:

Draft One

> Under ordinary circumstances, by adequately utilizing their human resources and by administrating effectively to their teachers and counselors, secondary school principals can effectuate innovations that can lead to a maximizing of the academic gains of their students on standardized exams. Under certain circumstances, these increased student academic gains can result in establishing an improved image for their institution.

Draft Two

> By involving their teachers and counselors, high school principals can help students perform better on standardized tests. This could improve the school's image.

These two paragraphs say the same thing. The difference is that the second draft says it more clearly and succinctly. The reader immediately knows the author's purpose and can anticipate what will follow. With the first draft, the reader is likely to get lost in the wordiness and give up.

Manuscript Length

The length of a manuscript must comply with the limits set by a particular journal. Some journals specify their minimum and maximum length on a manuscript style sheet printed in the back of the journal. Or you can request a copy of a journal's style sheet by writing or calling the editor. You also can estimate a journal's article length by counting the number of words in a line and multiplying by the number of lines in a column. A typical manuscript typed double-space is approximately 300 words a page. With this as a guideline, a writer can estimate pretty closely whether the manuscript complies with the journal's specifications. If you have written a 30-page manuscript and the journal where you want to place it specifies a maximum of 10 pages, then some judicious cutting is in order.

Matters of Style

Good writing has both substance and style. Substance comes from the author's knowledge of the subject; style is a more elusive quality, involving sentence length, word choice, degree of abstraction, use of anecdotes and illustrations, use of humor or satire, and many other elements. Different topics lend themselves to different styles. Reporting research calls for a different style than writing a how-to-do-it article on use of the overhead projector. Arguing the merit pay issue pro and con calls for a different style than describing a school's successful science fair. Also, education journals usually have a distinctive style. By scanning a few issues of a journal, beginning writers can get a sense of a journal's style and then make their writing conform to that style.

In good writing the message intended is the message received. The basic elements of style for communicating the message are clarity and conciseness. Clarity is achieved by using relatively short sentences, by using familiar words, and by using examples to support generalizations. Conciseness is achieved through editing and revision.

The major and most recent writing assignment of many beginning writers is a dissertation or thesis. They are written to demonstrate a person's ability to conduct research. Their reading audience rarely extends beyond the members of the dissertation or thesis committee. They are seldom models of concise writing. Dissertation writers come to realize the importance of conciseness when they have to write an

abstract of their dissertation with a specified word limit, or when they undertake to write a journal article based on the dissertation. They soon learn that writing concisely takes discipline.

Many successful writers do not concern themselves with matters of clarity and conciseness until they have completed a first draft. They write fast, getting down all their ideas on paper as quickly as possible. Then they go back and carefully check to see that every sentence says precisely what they mean and that the organization flows logically. There are some writers whose mental processes are so precise that they do very little rewriting, but they are a minority. Most of us need to edit and revise, and we should.

Below is an example of how writing can be made more concise through editing and revision. The original draft of a paragraph is followed by the edited version. Note how unnecessary words are eliminated and sentences are tightened.

> When the American public's anxiety is aroused by war, inflation, economic depression, civil unrest, or whatever, we Americans usually look for someone or something to blame, and that's good. Why? Because the one unfailing sign of a vital, healthy national climate is the American people's vigorous desire to participate in criticism and give suggestions for reforms and refinements. Frequently, the easiest target to attack is the tax-supported neighborhood elementary and secondary schools.

> When public anxiety is aroused, Americans usually look for someone or something to blame. That's good, because one sign of a healthy national climate is people's willingness to criticize and to suggest reforms and refinements. Frequently, the easiest target is the tax-supported neighborhood school.

Other aspects of style that contribute to clarity are keeping the subject close to the verb, modifiers close to what they modify, and pronouns close to their antecedents. Also, try to avoid writing in the passive voice. Writing is much more forceful when using the active voice.

Most journal editors now try to avoid gender specific terms when referring to jobs that are now held by both men and women. Thus policeman becomes police officer, mailman becomes mail carrier, airline stewardess becomes flight attendant. Also, avoid the use of the generic pronoun "he" when the antecedent may be either male or female. Rather than use the awkward constructions, "he or she," "he/she," "s/he," and "his or her," many writers and editors pluralize the antecedent. For example, rather than write, "A teacher has his or her own way of handling discipline," you can write, "Teachers have their own ways of handling discipline." Writers must be sensitive to changes in language usage resulting from the women's movement.

Education writing has been criticized justifiably for its excessive use of jargon, sometimes referred to as "educationese" or "pedagese." Every discipline has its own technical vocabulary, which usually is understood by those in the discipline, and education is no exception. But there is a difference between specialized vocabulary and gibberish. We find both in education writing. If technical terms are defined at the outset, then the reader should have no difficulty understanding them. However, many educators are not even aware they are using technical terms in their writing and speaking and are taken aback when someone asks them what they mean. A good test to determine if your writing contains too many technical terms or too much jargon is to ask someone out of your field to read it and tell you if it communicates clearly.

Placing Your Manuscript with the Right Journal

Several hundred journals in education are published in the United States. Most of them are directed to a specialized audience in terms of subject area, level of instruction, or job specialty. A few, such as the *Phi Delta Kappan*, are intended for a general audience of educators. Beginning writers should familiarize themselves with the wide variety of education journals by spending some time in the school district's professional library or a university library. It will be time well spent because they will find journals they have never seen before that might be the right one for their article. Also, by becoming familiar with a variety of journals, writers have some options to turn to in case their manuscript is rejected by the first journal to which they submit it.

Should I Send a Query Letter?

The purpose of a query letter is to find out if an editor has any interest in your topic. Many editors do not like query letters because it takes time to respond to them; they would prefer seeing a completed manuscript, which they can review and then decide about its publication possibilities. However, there are some advantages to the writer in using a query letter. With a query letter or even a phone call to an editor, you can find out if there is any interest in your topic. If the editor has already accepted a manuscript on the same or a related topic, you will know that it is unlikely that your manuscript

will be accepted. Rather than having your manuscript sit in an editor's office for two to three months while you wait for a decision, you will know immediately that you should try to place it with another journal. Remember, however, that if in response to a query letter or telephone call, an editor does express interest in your manuscript, this is no guarantee that it will be accepted. An editor uses many criteria in deciding what and what not to accept.

When writing a query letter, keep it brief but tailor it to the interests of the journal's readers. This lets the editor know that you are familiar with the journal and its readership. State the purpose of your article and include a persuasive sentence or two about why you think the topic is important for the journal's readers. If the manuscript is completed, indicate its length. Below is a sample query letter that covers the items discussed above.

Sample Query Letter

Thomas J. Buttery, Editor
American Middle School Education
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alabama
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487

Dear Dr. Buttery:

I have just completed an eight-page manuscript that reports the results of a study conducted at the University of Alabama on recent changes in school law that directly affect middle school administrators. I provide explicit examples of how the middle school administrator should adjust school discipline codes in order to comply with the new laws.

If you think this topic will be of interest to your journal readers, I can send you a copy of the manuscript immediately. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kenneth T. Henson, Head
Curriculum and Instruction

Note that this query letter does not give a complete summary of the manuscript. Rather, it focuses on why the topic will be particularly useful to middle school administrators, who are the primary audience of the journal. The fact that the manuscript is based on a recent study tells the editor that the information is current. This is a primary concern for editors because they want their journals to be as current as possible. By stating that the manuscript is completed and available for review, the editor, if interested, is likely to respond promptly. The body of this query letter contains only eight lines, but it tells enough to spark the interest of an editor and is likely to generate a response. Some topics will require more space to explain in a query letter, perhaps a paragraph or two. Editors appreciate brevity; they are busy people.

Refereed and Nonrefereed Journals

By definition, a refereed journal is one in which the manuscripts accepted for publication have been reviewed and approved by an independent committee of experts or an editorial board. Many universities prefer that their faculty publish in refereed journals because of their alleged prestige. Some universities even maintain a list of approved refereed journals and assign points to faculty who publish in these journals when conducting tenure and promotion reviews. Understandably, young professors are eager to publish in a refereed journal. However, there are many prestigious nonrefereed journals, including the *Phi Delta Kappan*, whose eminence stems from the prudent judgment of their editors.

Actually, the distinction between a refereed and nonrefereed journal is not as clear as some might think. Editors of refereed journals often cull out what they consider clearly inappropriate manuscripts and the reviewers never see them. When reviewers are in disagreement over a manuscript, the editor often makes the final decision. When the editor of a refereed journal solicits a manuscript from a prominent authority, it usually is published without any input from

reviewers. Many editors of nonrefereed journals have a network of readers they consult for advice on a particular manuscript, so in a sense the reader is a referee. Also, the editorial staff of nonrefereed journals, many of whom are as qualified as outside reviewers, function as a team in evaluating manuscripts.

In deciding where to place a manuscript, there are many factors to consider besides whether a journal is refereed or nonrefereed. First and foremost is the audience you want to reach. If your intended audience is secondary school principals, the best journal to reach them is the *NASSP Bulletin*, which is a nonrefereed journal. If you want to reach teacher educators, a good choice would be *Action in Teacher Education*, which is refereed. Another factor to consider is the circulation of the journal. Some refereed journals are highly specialized and may have a circulation of only 2,500 or so. If you want to reach a large audience of educators, you should consider one of the larger circulation journals such as the *Phi Delta Kappan*, which has a circulation of 145,000. For the beginning writer the immediate goal should be getting published, regardless of the prestige of the journal. The success of one publishing credit provides the impetus for continued writing.

Writing for a Research Journal

Research-oriented universities place great importance on their faculties publishing in research journals, because they are supposed to be the knowledge-generating institutions in our society. Publishing in research journals gives prestige to individuals and to their institutions.

Most research articles are written by university professors. They are trained in research design and are expected to devote part of their time to doing research. But all writers should consider submitting research or research-related articles. One reason is that it increases your chances of acceptance. In a survey conducted in 1983, fully 90% of the education journals surveyed carried some research articles. A content analysis of more than 50 prominent education journals found that almost half of the articles (46%) reported some research.

Keep in mind that there is a wide range of research-type articles in education journals. For pure research journals, criteria for manuscript acceptance focus heavily on methodology (research design, size of sample, selection of sample, return rate of questionnaires, etc.). Other journals carry articles that focus on the implications of research findings for practitioners, who make up the major readership of the journal. These kinds of articles often contain a summary of several research studies, which when synthesized, offer some guidelines for practice. Synthesizing research and drawing implications for practice is a highly skilled form of writing, but you do not have to be a university researcher to do it.

Another way of writing a research-based article without being a trained researcher is by using an unsophisticated yet highly useful tool, the questionnaire. Questionnaires allow you to collect current data that many journal editors like to use. And if the questionnaire is carefully developed, it can make the writing process quite easy.

To use a personal example, I developed a questionnaire for education journal editors to answer those questions most frequently asked by prospective writers on how to improve their chances of getting their manuscripts published. The idea for the questionnaire came from teaching a course on writing for publication and conducting a number of workshops on the topic. It became clear that graduate students and faculty members from across the country were threatened by a process that to me seemed relatively simple. Actually, the information they were seeking was what I had gained over two decades of publishing experience.

In designing the questionnaire to send to editors, I remembered from my own research training that the return rate for questionnaires declines as the length of the questionnaire increases. So I limited the questionnaire to one legal-size page. I also remembered to limit the questions to only those items that would provide the factual information needed. I also threw in a couple of extra questions that prospective writers might find useful: "What mistakes do your contributors

most often make?" and "What suggestions would you offer prospective contributors?"

The questions were arranged in the same order as the forthcoming article I envisioned. When the questionnaires were returned, writing the article was quite easy. Following a query letter, I submitted the article and it was accepted by the first journal to which it was submitted; it was published in the March 1984 issue of the *Phi Delta Kappan*.

Submitting the Manuscript

When submitting a manuscript to a journal, give careful attention to its general appearance. Whether typed or printed by computer, all of it should be double-spaced, even footnotes and references. Make sure the typewriter or computer printer ribbon is new so that the print is clear and dark. Allow about 1½ inches for both left and right margins. This gives the editor enough space to write comments or queries. If you submit a duplicated copy, make sure the copier makes clean copies and all the pages are included. Check the journal to see what style it uses for subheads, charts, figures, footnotes, and references and conform to that style. If you include photos, provide captions.

Mail the manuscript in an envelope that is large enough that the manuscript does not need to be folded. Enclose a cover letter that includes a complete address and office and home phone numbers. Also include a self-addressed stamped envelope for returning the manuscript in case it is rejected.

Most editors acknowledge receipt of a manuscript within a few days. However, a decision on whether the manuscript is accepted for publication can take from three weeks to three months, sometimes longer. Waiting for a response is frustrating, but writers should understand that when a manuscript has to be sent to reviewers, it can take considerable time before an editor can make a decision. Under no circumstances should a manuscript be sent to more than one journal at a time. Editors and reviewers invest considerable time evaluating a

manuscript. After going through the evaluation process, they do not want to be told that another journal has accepted the manuscript.

A Word About the Author-Editor Relationship

Sometimes beginning writers tend to regard editors as adversaries (usually after receiving a rejection letter). They are not; in fact, they often are wise counselors and good teachers. It is important to remember that editors' first responsibility is to their readers. They know their readers' interests and try to serve them with the articles they accept for publication. An editor's rejection letter is not necessarily a judgment of the quality of a manuscript; it often is simply a statement that the manuscript is not right for a particular journal.

Another responsibility of editors is to make the writer's meaning perfectly clear with as few words as possible. Good editors strive for clarity and succinctness in every sentence and paragraph in their journals. They also make helpful suggestions for improving the organization of an article. The cuts they make are sometimes for space reasons but also for improving the flow of a manuscript. Beginning writers will find it instructive to compare their original manuscript with the edited version. They will learn much about how to improve their writing. Good editors are your ally not your enemy.

A Final Word

The suggestions offered here about writing for publication are a guide. They show the way but they don't do the hard work that writing involves. Only the writer can do that. Now is the time to begin. Make it work for you and enjoy it.

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Collaborating with a Co-author

Collaborating with a colleague on writing an article has many advantages and some pitfalls. An obvious advantage is that a writing team can usually produce more publications in a shorter time. More important is that collaboration allows a writer to learn from the partner. Ideally, members of a writing team complement each other. For example, a practitioner might work with a statistician in producing a research article. Or one person might be good at generating ideas for a rough first draft, while the partner refines the ideas and writes the final draft.

A pitfall is working with a partner whose personality is incompatible and whose work habits are different. A task-oriented writer who takes deadlines seriously would not mix with a procrastinator. Exercise care when choosing a collaborator; otherwise, what is expected to be an enjoyable experience can turn into a frustrating nightmare. Once a decision to collaborate is made, agree on how the work load is to be shared and set deadlines for first, second, and final drafts.

Another issue to consider is that some institutions give less credit for collaborated publications than they do for single-author publications. A related issue is whose name should be listed first on a manuscript. Usually the major contributor is listed first; but when the labor is equally distributed, the partner who originated the idea probably should be listed first. This issue arises frequently when a professor collaborates with a doctoral student on an article based on the stu-

dent's dissertation. Since the student probably has done most of the work, the student should be listed as the first author. On the other hand, if the dissertation is an extension of prior research by the professor, then a good case could be made for the professor's name being listed first.

A different form of collaboration that can be helpful for the beginning writer is an informal support group that meets periodically to discuss and share ideas for writing. A good format is the brown-bag lunch seminar. Each time the group meets, a different member (or an invited guest) makes a 30- to 45-minute presentation on one writing topic. One week the presentation might be on "How to Choose a Topic." The next week a colleague from the English Department might discuss "How to Write Good Topic Sentences." The support group also can serve as a sounding board for article ideas; or they might offer critiques of a manuscript prepared by one of the members. Through the critiques, all members of the support group can learn how to improve their writing.

Support groups provide additional services to their members. Longer sessions can provide invaluable editing experience while giving helpful feedback to the authors. Each member present is given a copy of one or more pages of someone's manuscript. Together, the entire group critiques and rewrites the manuscript. The practice of critiquing helps all members of the group who, as they edit, become sensitive to improved ways of writing sentences and paragraphs.